

CHINA: FLOODS

11 August 1999

appeal no. 17/99

situation report no. 1

period covered: 4 - 10 August 1999

Since the launch of the Federation Appeal, the flood situation in China continues to be alarming. Up to 100 million people now appear to have been affected, many for the second time in two years, adding to the Federation's fears for the short term food security of the worst affected homeless populations. Local fund-raising efforts are helping the Red Cross Society of China meet part of the needs, but major international support is needed to bring prompt relief to those affected by this latest catastrophe.

The context

Sustained rainfall since the middle of June has been responsible for flooding in the majority of the provinces lying along the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze river in China. Over 700 people have died and 24,000 were injured as a result of this year's floods and 5.5 million have been displaced throughout the country. Six provinces - Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui - have been particularly badly affected by the flooding. In these provinces, Red Cross branches estimate some 60 million people have been put at risk, while 1.8 million have been evacuated from their homes.

Meteorological forecasts indicate further rainfall, with a potential for further floods not only along the Yangtze but also along the Yellow River. Experts fear that the Yellow River would be particularly prone to flooding, given that up to 35% of the existing levees along the river are not up to minimum standards.

Latest events

On 5 August 1999, the Ministry of Civil Affairs stated that some 100 million people throughout the country have been affected by this year's floods, representing some 58% of the total population affected throughout the whole of last year's (1998) catastrophic disaster. Since China is only partly through the flooding season, this gives some indication of the problem facing the country this year. The economic losses thus far have been valued at 66.8 billion RMB (12 billion CHF). Over 11 million hectares of crop land are inundated, with 1.56 million hectares destroyed.

Reports that water levels are receding in some areas have been tempered with further forecasts for rainfall. Even if there is a rapid decline in the water levels, it is likely that many areas will remain under water for months to come until flood waters are able to drain off the land. From all reports received from both the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) and elsewhere, including ECHO, there are indications that in many provinces, whole counties are under 1.8 - 2 metres of water.

Public health concerns remain a priority, due to pollution caused by the flood waters and high temperatures.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Deputy Head of the Relief Department at the Red Cross Society of China completed an assessment in Hunan and Anhui Provinces late last week. Needs for food and sanitation materials were determined to be the highest priorities. This largely reflected the findings of the ECHO representative during a recent field visit. In many of the affected areas, floods have occurred in four of the last five years and have depleted the resources of local governments. Provincial Red Cross branches have also dispatched nearly all of their Disaster Preparedness relief material.

Countrywide, up to 2,500 mobile Red Cross medical teams are trying to address the medical needs of the homeless population.

Stocks of relief material continue to be distributed out of the Red Cross Disaster Preparedness centres in the affected Provinces. They include clothing, water purification tablets and medicines. This is far from enough, but all provincial branches are actively involved in local fund-raising to continue distributions to the victims. Close to RMB 20 million (CHF 3.65 million) of in kind donations and relief items from disaster preparedness stocks have so far been distributed.

The first priority will be to supply water purification tablets, sanitation materials, and tents, using funds from the Federation's disaster reserve currently held in country. The first funds from the Federation's DREF (Disaster Relief Emergency Fund) and the Canadian Red Cross arrived in the first week of August. They are being sent directly to the Provinces concerned to allow for the rapid local purchase of approximately 400 MT. of rice.

On Tuesday, 10 August, a Federation/RCSC assessment team was dispatched to the affected areas to further assess the flood situation and the conditions of the affected population. The team is composed of one representative of the RCSC, one staff member from the Netherlands and the Philippines Red Cross societies, and the Federation regional health delegate from the Kuala Lumpur Regional Delegation.

Outstanding needs

Because of the enormity of the disaster, the needs are huge. Since it is clearly impossible for even the Red Cross to take on the task of assisting all the homeless, the RCSC and Federation have identified six of the worst hit provinces to assist. The Federation and RCSC will identify specific areas to target within these provinces. Together with food the main priorities are for water purification tablets and sanitation materials. The Federation will consider procuring clothing and quilts later on in the operation.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Floods throughout the south east Asian region have dominated news reports in the past week. Significant media interest about the Red Cross relief efforts in China has been experienced both by the

representation office in Beijing and the Secretariat. Over 50 interviews have been conducted with major news organisations (wire services, radio, TV and print) in the field during the past week.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The needs, already enormous, may continue to increase if further rains bring additional flooding over the coming weeks. Donor support is urgently needed, and more information can be obtained by contacting Marcel Fortier, Desk Officer, on + + 4122 7394268. Email: fortier@ifrc.org

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ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 17/99

PLEDGES RECEIVED

08/11/99

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL----->				8,500,000		14.54%
AUSTRALIAN- RC		25,000	AUD	25,820	08/10/99	
CANADIAN - RC		100,000	CAD	95,930	07/20/99	RELIEF SUPPLIES
SWEDISH - RC		1,800,000	SEK	329,040	08/10/99	
UNITED STATES - GOVT		500,000	USD	785,000	08/10/99	WATSAN, FOOD, CLOTHING, QUILTS
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1,235,790 CHF		14.54%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCL. PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0 CHF		0.00%

NOT REQUESTED IN APPEAL

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0 CHF		